

Silkman House,  
Scranton, Pennsylvania

Lackawanna Co.

HABS No. Pa. 217

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PA.

85-SCRAN

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*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings.*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Ralph W. Lear, District Officer,  
311-312 Dime Bank Building  
Wilkes-Barre, Penna.

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SILKMAN HOUSE

Scranton, Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania

Custodian

Heirs of the Estate.

Date of Erection

1840

Present Condition

Very poor; well built, but badly in  
need of repairs and redecorating.

Number of Stories

Two story house, with basement and attic.

Materials of Construction

Foundations, hand made brick. Wood siding  
Gable roof. Tar paper now, originally  
wood shingles.

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SILKMAN HOUSE

Scranton, Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania

Providence, named for Providence, Rhode Island, was formed in 1770, a sixth of the township allotted by the Susquehanna Company, to the Connecticut settlers. As a township, Providence has lost its identity. It is now two miles from Scranton, although incorporated into the first and second wards of the city, preserves its name, through its postoffice and other independent features. As a village, its growth was tardy until 1826, when it consisted of only two dwellings.

Several generations of Silkman have lived in this old home, which was built in 1840 on 2066 North Main Avenue, Providence, by Aron Silkman. John Silkman belongs to the family which was founded in this country by John Silkman, Sr., a native of Germany, who emigrated to the United States in 1776, and took an active part on the side of the colonists in the Revolutionary War. Jacob Silkman, son of John Silkman was born in New York, and in 1849, moved to Providence on Main Avenue. There were then only four houses in Providence.

William Silkman, also a son of John Silkman, bought this home from his cousin, Aron Silkman, a few years after it was built. There, he resided until his death in 1874. During his life he did an important business in the buying and selling of coal lands and real estate. One of his chief ambitions was to secure the separation of Luzerne from Lackawanna County, and to this end, he spared neither time nor money, for years, spending his winters in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, working in the interests of the new county and fighting the Luzerne forces. He died a few years before his ambition was realized.

Miss Sarah Augusta Silkman, daughter of William, and last member of the family which has occupied this house for nearly a century, died about one month ago, (May, 1936) at the old homestead. She was a young woman, just finishing college when Scranton became a city. Her memories of the old days, if they could have been made into a lasting record, would have furnished much interest and value to future historians. She was an eccentric woman, however, and any knowledge of the early history of Scranton, was

never written down for the benefit of posterity. Miss Silkman lived for nearly nine decades in the old homestead. Her death ended a chapter in the history of a family, which over a period of many years, loomed large, not only in the North Scranton section, but in the city as a whole.

The architecture of the Silkman House is of the Greek Revival period. It is a frame building covered with flush wood siding of random widths. The foundations are of brick and in most cases, these are hand-made. The size of the house is 36½x44½. It has two stories, a basement and an attic.

The basement contains three principal rooms, a kitchen, dining-room, and a vegetable storage room. There is a coal range in the basement, made in 1840, which has not been used in many years. The first floor has a front entrance hall, with the parlor, dining-room, living room, and bedroom, leading off from it. There are three smaller rooms in the rear, a pantry and two storage rooms. There is a fireplace in the living room which has a wood mantel, and a metal front, but this is closed.

On the second floor, there is a long hall, connecting the three large bedrooms, and two storage rooms. The nook on the second floor, and the sun porch on the first floor are both later additions.

The house presents a very gloomy appearance. Its long front, double-hung windows are protected with louvered shutters, which are closed. The house is in fairly good condition, but is badly in need of new paint and some repairs. It is said, that the house has not been painted in about thirty years.

The front door is very heavy and has on it, the original latches, and a bronze name-plate, which is very old. In front of the house, is a decorated cast iron fence, which is still in good condition.

Historic Material obtained from: "Hitchock's History",  
Scranton Times, (newspaper) 1936, May.

Author

Approved

Date

Reviewed Aug. 19, 1936 THW